

DECISION MEMORANDUM
WOODLEAF PROJECT, YUBA COUNTY, CALIFORNIA
FEATHER RIVER RANGER DISTRICT
PLUMAS NATIONAL FOREST
U.S. FOREST SERVICE

BACKGROUND

Tree mortality (bug kill) has occurred and continues to occur along LaPorte Road near the small rural community of Woodleaf. These trees create a threat to overhead powerlines and LaPorte Road as well as creating a future fuels hazard.

PROPOSED PROJECT NAME AND LOCATION

Woodleaf Salvage Project, PALS 57757. The project area nearby the community of Woodleaf, Yuba County, California. Legal Description: portions of Mount Diablo Meridian, T. 19 N., R. 7 E., sections 16 and 17. Most of the area is comprised of Sierra mixed conifer consisting of ponderosa pine, Douglas-fir, sugar pine, incense cedar, California black oak, Pacific madrone, tanoak, and white fir. The project proposes activities on approximately 68 acres within the project area.

PROPOSED PROJECT ACTION AND DESCRIPTION

This project proposes the identification and removal of hazard trees. We propose to remove the trees immediately using conventional tractor logging practices. The approximate size of the current bug kill area is 14 acres. The greater area being proposed for salvage operations is 68 contiguous acres where continuing tree mortality could occur.

PURPOSE OF ACTION

These dead, dying, and structurally damaged live trees present a safety hazard and risk to forest visitors, neighboring landowners and their homes, employees, and facilities.

NEED FOR ACTION

The January, 2004, Sierra Nevada Forest Plan Amendment provides for ecosystem restoration following catastrophic disturbance events through the salvage harvest of dead and dying trees conducted to recover the economic value of this material and to support objectives for reducing hazardous fuels, improving forest health, reintroducing fire, and/or reestablishing forested conditions.

Providing socioeconomic benefits, including the provision of a sustainable supply of timber, is part of the mandate of the USDA Forest Service. Providing adequate timber supplies contributes to the economic stability of rural communities in Sierra Nevada forests.

PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT

The project was entered into PALS and appeared on the Plumas National Forest Schedule of Proposed Actions (SOPA), March 2, 2020.

ANALYSIS AND REVIEW

The area was surveyed and included in the Mt. Hope Timber sale logged in 2011. The NEPA document was the Slapjack Project EIS signed in 2008. It was more recently surveyed in the Challenge Project signed on December 12, 2018. Resource specialists reviewed these project records and visited the site as necessary to analyze for extraordinary circumstances.

LEVEL OF SIGNIFICANCE

As the responsible official, I am responsible for evaluating the effects of the project relative to the definition of significance established by the CEQ Regulations (40 CFR 1508.13). I have found that the context and intensity of the analyzed resource areas do not meet the threshold nor the criteria for extraordinary circumstances or potential negative or significant effects in the area of potential effect.

RESULTS OF REVIEW AND ANALYSIS - FINDINGS

I find that there are no extraordinary circumstances that would warrant further analysis and documentation in an EA or EIS. I took into account resource conditions identified in agency procedures that should be considered in determining whether extraordinary circumstances might exist:

- Federally listed threatened or endangered species or designated critical habitat, species proposed for Federal listing or proposed critical habitat, or Forest Service sensitive species –
 - The project area is in HRCA, between two spotted owl PAC. The unit is not within ¼ mile of either PAC, therefore surveys are not required. The activities proposed will not affect FS Species of Concern. There are no T&E species or designated critical habitat nor is it within the elevational range of the SNYLF or Fisher.
 - There is one botany controlled area within the project area, with management requirements, and a number of weed sites to avoid, the proposed activities will not affect FS Species of Concern.
- Flood plains, wetlands, or municipal watersheds – None are present.

- Congressionally designated areas such as wilderness, wilderness study areas, or national recreation areas – None are present.
- Inventoried roadless areas or potential wilderness areas – None are present.
- Research natural areas – None are present.
- American Indians and Alaska Native religious or cultural sites – No Native American cultural resources have been recorded in the project area.
- Archaeological sites, or historic properties or areas – Cultural resources are recorded in the vicinity of the project. No cultural resources are recorded within or directly adjacent to the project area. These sites will be protected from project impacts through the use of standard resource protection measures set forward in the Regional 106 Compliance Programmatic Agreement. Given the above, the project as currently designed will have no effect on heritage resources.

CUMULATIVE EFFECTS

Established by the Chief, this is one of a category of actions which do not individually or cumulatively have a significant effect on the human environment and which have been found to have no such effect in procedures adopted by the agency in implementation of regulations (40 CFR 1508.4).

DECISION

I have decided to approve the project and proposed action with the requirements, design features, best management practices, or mitigation measures listed in this Decision Memorandum and in Appendix A.

I am authorizing salvage harvest of approximately 68 acres of dead and dying trees using conventional or mechanical tractor logging practices. Trees will be marked using the hazard tree guidelines for Forest Service facilities and roads in the Pacific Southwest.

Re-entry may occur up to 3 years to remove any additional danger trees for additional volume. Trees to be removed under this project will be designated with Blue Paint for cut tree mark in the low mortality areas or Leave Tree mark of white paint will be used in high mortality areas.

I am also authorizing maintenance activities to include: site preparation which can include biomassing, hand-cutting, hand- or grapple-piling and pile burning; planting; grubbing after planting; and a variety of maintenance activities including mastication, hand-cut and hand- or grapple-pile, pile burning, prescribed fire, and targeted grazing. Maintenance could be needed for a period of 40 or more years.

There is a need to improve roads to reduce the amount of sediment from roads that reach streams. To protect water quality, roads will be modified by out-sloping the 19N39 Road for approximately 200 feet and adding erosion control material such as certified weed free straw. The erosion feature is about 300 feet long by two feet wide.

This action is categorically excluded from documentation in an environmental impact statement (EIS) or an environmental assessment (EA). The applicable category of actions is identified in agency procedures as 36 CFR 220.6(e)(13), *salvage of dead and/or dying trees not to exceed 250 acres, requiring no more than 1/2 mile of temporary road construction*. This category of action(s) is applicable because the actions authorized in this decision are activities carried out routinely by the agency.

FINDINGS REQUIRED BY OTHER LAWS AND REGULATIONS

This decision is consistent with the Plumas National Forest Land Management Plan, as amended by the 2004 Sierra Nevada Forests Plan Amendment (SNFPA) supplemental EIS and ROD.

ADMINISTRATIVE REVIEW (APPEAL) OPPORTUNITIES

This Decision does not provide for any “appeal” or “objection” opportunities. All public and stakeholder input was received and considered during the FRRD collaborative process for this project. Once this Decision is signed the project or proposed action may be implemented immediately, notwithstanding any other law or regulation from another agency that would preclude its immediate implementation.

IMPLEMENTATION DATE AND REQUIREMENTS

This action may be implemented immediately following the delivery and discussion of the Regulatory Requirements, Best Management Practices (BMPs), Design Features, and/or Mitigation Measures required by this Decision Memorandum with those responsible for implementation. A notice of receipt or acknowledgement must be received by the Responsible Official or their designee and maintained with this Decision Memorandum prior to implementation and maintained until the project is complete and reviewed by District officials.

CONTACT

For additional information concerning this decision, contact: Clay R. Davis, District Planner, email clay.davis@usda.gov, phone 530-532-8940 or Eric J. Murphy, Timber Management Officer, email eric.j.murphy@usda.gov, phone 530-532-8922.


David B. Brillenz
District Ranger
Feather River Ranger District
Plumas National Forest


Date

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